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ABSTRACT

A survey of 35 two-year colleges with exemplary institutional planning systems was conducted to determine the present status of institutional planning and to develop a conceptually sound planning process model. The 35 colleges were asked to complete a survey instrument focusing on over 250 variables; 32 colleges responded. Survey results indicated that successful planning is dependent upon six prerequisite conditions: top-level leadership commitment; experienced staff; development of planning procedures and schedules; broad participation; integration with planning activities at the state level; and adequate attention to pre-planning activities. Based on the experiences of the respondents, several requirements for a planning model were identified: (1) planning should not be separated from decision-making; (2) planning should be both long- and short-range; (3) it should result in a budget and reflect the goals of the institution's mission statement; and (4) it should be information-based and provide a means for evaluation. The survey also solicited information on the date of the establishment of the planning office, responsibilities of planning officers and to whom they are accountable, time spent in planning, most valuable sources of planning information, obstacles to planning, and contributions of planning. The report provides diagrams illustrating the planning model developed on the basis of the study and a bibliography. (JP)

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AN APPROACH TO COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL
PLANNING FOR THE 1980s

Presented at
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This paper is based on research completed by the author while a National Fellow at the Advanced Study Center, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, from September 1978 to June 1979.

Introduction

Can two-year colleges remain sensitive and responsive to unprecedented changes in educational needs and interests under conditions of tight fiscal constraint? If so, how? These two questions appear to be a priority concern of an expanding number of college presidents calling for improved approaches to institutional planning. Such interest is evidenced by agendas of professional meetings, the demand for planning resource materials, and recommendations of accrediting associations and funding organizations.

The major premise of this research is that two-year colleges need an effective institutional planning system. The problem is that little is known about the nature or effectiveness of existing planning systems or the factors that enhance the effectiveness of planning.

Purposes

This study had two major objectives. First, the study was designed to describe the nature and effectiveness of planning systems in selected two-year colleges. More specifically, this study was intended to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Why have two-year colleges engaged in planning?
2. What obstacles to planning have been encountered?
3. How have colleges organized for planning?
4. What principal sources of data are utilized to support planning systems?
5. How effective have planning systems been in achieving the objectives for which they were designed?
6. What factors enhance the effectiveness of planning systems?

The second major objective was to develop a conceptually sound institutional planning process model that reflected the research findings and contributions of planning theorists.

Research Procedures

Survey research was selected as the most appropriate methodology for this study since the primary end sought was to describe the present status of institutional planning systems at a select group of two-year colleges. The initial step in conducting the study was to identify and solicit the cooperation of two-year colleges which were considered to have exemplary planning systems in operation. Individuals with planning expertise who were familiar with the status of planning activities in two-year colleges were asked to recommend institutions for the study. The president and/or planning officer from each institution was contacted by telephone to ascertain if the planning system was perceived as exemplary and if the institution was willing to participate in the study. Forty-four institutions from 21 states were nominated. Thirty-five institutions met requirements for participation. Results of this study are based on responses from thirty-two of those institutions. The survey instruments included over 250 variables which described the nature and effectiveness of planning at this select group of institutions. Data were analyzed via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

An in-depth case study was also completed at one institution in the sample. The case study was used as a preliminary step in the research strategy to gain insight into the nature of an institutional planning system.

Summary of Research Findings

Research findings presented in this paper should be considered preliminary. These findings are limited to responses from 32 institutions in the sample. Data is still being gathered and analyzed.

Specific findings that relate to the objectives of this paper are summarized below:

1. Most planning offices have been established in the last 4-5 years (56% since 1975).
2. In most cases, the planning officer also has responsibility for institutional research. Colleges are recognizing the need to hire a person with expertise in institutional planning, research, and evaluation.
3. Over 50 percent of the planning officers have the title of director and believe they should report to the president because planning is an institution-wide responsibility and requires top level support.
4. Individuals with planning responsibility indicate they spend about half (48%) of their time planning. They recommend that about three quarters of their time should be available for planning responsibilities.
5. Involvement was identified as an essential condition for effective planning. Nearly three quarters (72%) of the institutions surveyed utilized a planning committee as one way of involving key people in the planning process.
6. The most essential components of a plan were identified as 1) a mission statement, 2) assumptions about the future, 3) goal statements (100%), 4) measurable objectives, 5) enrollment projections, and 6) projected facility requirements.
7. Institutional surveys and studies, computerized data files, and discussions among administrators were identified as the most valuable sources of information for planning.
8. The five most significant obstacles to planning were identified as 1) inadequate data to support planning, 2) inadequate financial or staff support, 3) lack of coordination between planning and budgeting decisions, 4) excessive time requirements, and 5) lack of planning experience and expertise.
9. The six factors considered most significant in enhancing the effectiveness of planning were: 1) expressed commitment by top-level leadership, 2) planning being information-based, 3) understanding institutional mission, 4) broad institutional participation, 5) a means for evaluating institutional performance, and 6) staff with expertise in planning.
10. The six most significant contributions of institutional planning were identified as: 1) improved college management, 2) improved coordination of instructional, facilities, and financial planning, 3) improved institutional climate, 4) improved resource allocation decisions, 5) basis for budget preparation, and 6) improved academic decisions.

Institutional Planning Process Model

Institutional planning is an administrative function best implemented by developing a formal step-by-step process. A conceptual model of an institutional

planning system is presented in this section. This model was developed within the framework of the Planning, Management, and Evaluation (PME) System. Figures 1 and 2 show the basic components and relationships among the components of the planning system. The cyclical and dynamic nature of the model is illustrated in Figure 3. Planning activities are outlined step-by-step in Figure 4*.

*For more information on the planning process model, see S. L. Van Ausdle, Comprehensive Institutional Planning in Two-Year Colleges: A Planning Process and Case Study. Columbus, Ohio: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1980.

Figure 1

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS FOR TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

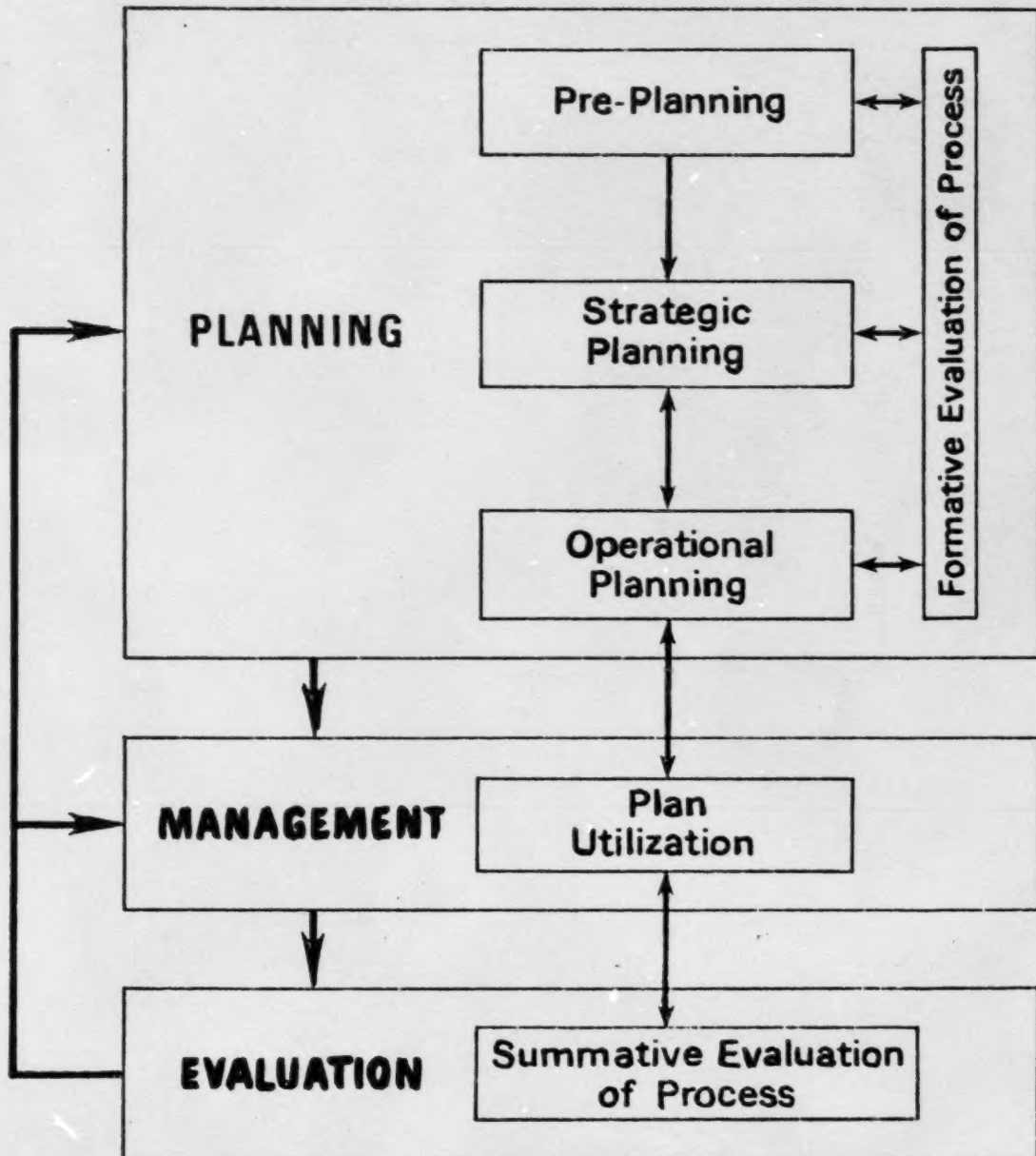


Figure 2

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS MODEL

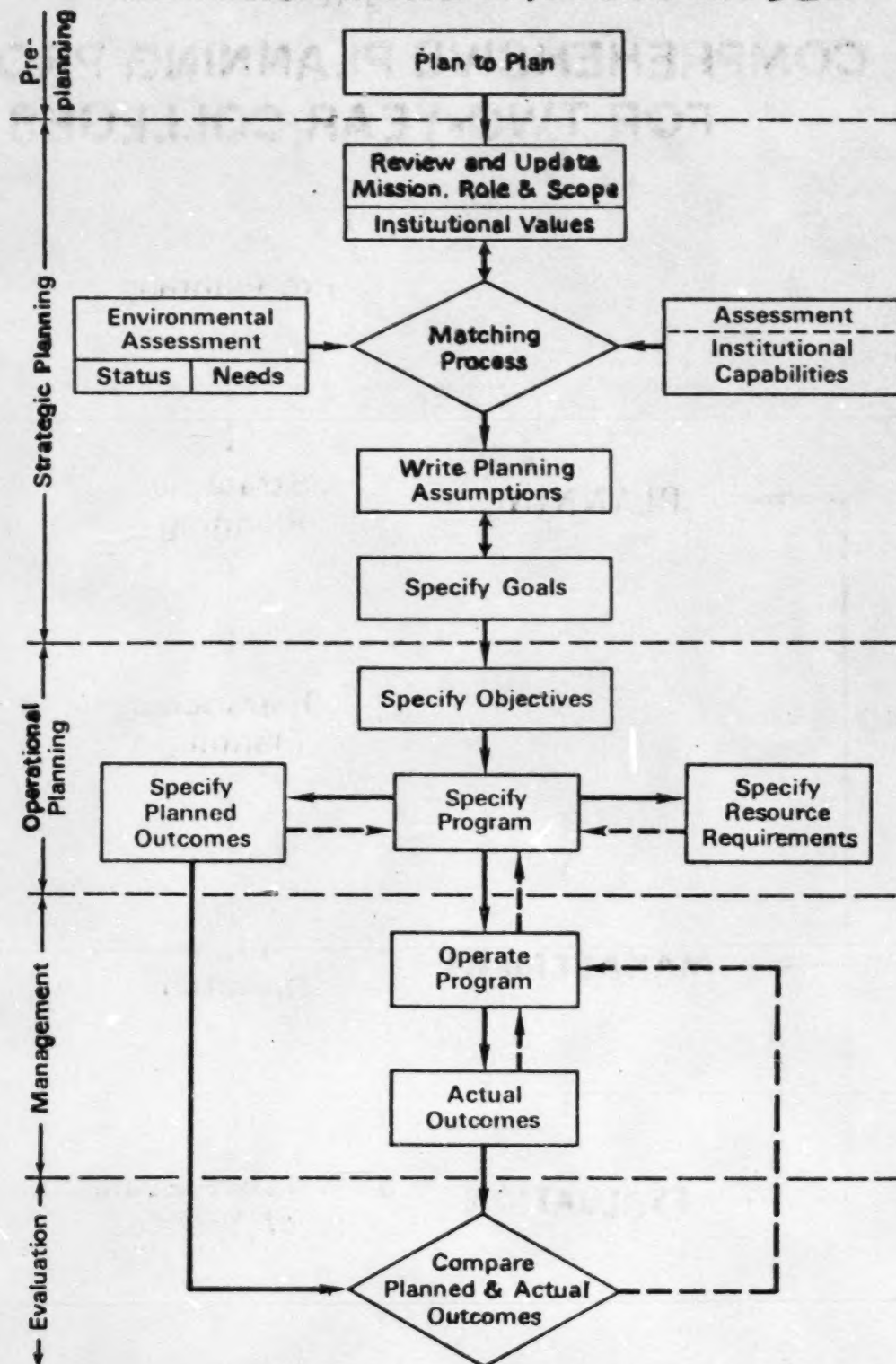


Figure 3

THE PLANNING CYCLE

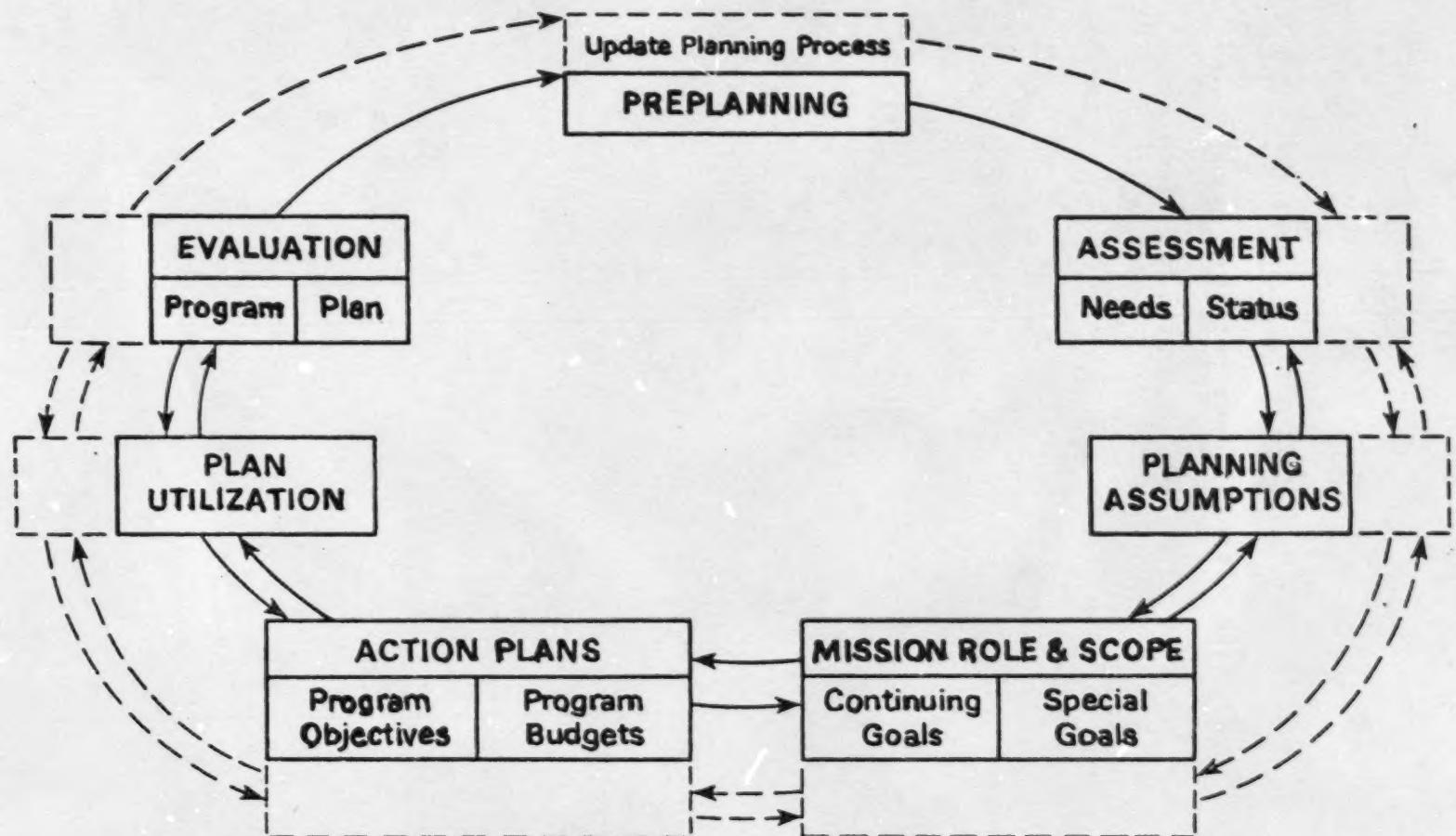


Figure 4

STEPS IN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS FOR TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

PLANNING			MANAGEMENT	EVALUATION
Phase 1.0 PREPLANNING	Phase 2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING	Phase 3.0 OPERATIONAL PLANNING	Phase 4.0 PLAN UTILIZATION	Phase 5.0 MONITORING & EVALUATION
1.1 Determine planning requirements 1.2 Evaluate existing capabilities 1.3 Develop planning policy 1.4 Assign responsibility 1.5 Appoint planning council 1.6 Determine resource requirements 1.7 Learn about planning 1.8 Develop planning structure 1.9 Determine planning cycle 1.10 Develop planning calendar 1.11 Develop a planning process 1.12 Train staff 1.13 Evaluate preplanning efforts 1.14 Report progress	2.1 Conduct environmental needs assessment 2.2 Assess institutional capabilities 2.3 Review and update mission scope, role, and statement 2.4 Write planning assumptions 2.5 State continuing goals 2.6 State special goals	3.1 Establish planning units 3.2 Strategic plan studied by units 3.3 Units update plans and budgets 3.4 Staff update professional development plan	• Modify ongoing activity • Prepare annual operating budget • Prepare biennial operating budget • Prepare capital budget • Identify staff development needs • Identify evaluation criteria • College Promotion	5.1 Identify information requirements 5.2 Update information system 5.3 Obtain and monitor feedback 5.4 Provide for contingency planning 5.5 Evaluation of programs 5.6 Evaluation of planning process 5.7 Revise planning process

Summary

Effective planning does not just happen -- it must be planned. The success of planning is dependent upon certain prerequisite conditions. These conditions are:

1. Top-level leadership commitment,
2. Adequate staff time and expertise,
3. Development of a planning procedure and a schedule,
4. Broad participation,
5. Integration with planning activities at state system level, and
6. Adequate attention to preplanning activities.

Past experiences of planners have suggested fundamental requirements for an effective planning process. Important requirements are:

1. Planning should not be separated from decision-making,
2. Planning should be both short and long-range,
3. Planning must result in a budget,
4. Planning requires a definition and understanding of institutional mission, aims, and goals,
5. Planning must be information-based,
6. Planning should emphasize the development of working papers, not a final printed document,
7. Planning requires a means of evaluating institutional performance, and
8. Planning requires the development of institutional priorities.

Planning has been identified as one of the most important administrative functions. Although planning has long been an everyday activity until recently, little attention has been given to the comprehensive institutional planning process. In the past, many college administrators viewed planning as something imposed upon them from a parent organization, usually for the wrong reasons. Now many administrators have come to realize that planning actually works to their benefit.

Planning is a process which attempts to predetermine a desired course of action. Planning can help an institution shift from a posture of reaction to proaction. Planning can help the college shape the environment as well as react to the environment as it changes. Planning helps establish sound guidelines for the efficient and effective operation of an institution by providing an intelligible rationale for decision-making. Effective planning can also help persuade significant others that the college is deliberate in its actions and that the actions are meeting the needs for which it is responsible.

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